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WORLD CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS
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Letter dated 10 April 1992 from the Acting Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights

I have the honour to request that the attached proposal by the delegation of Australia for national action plans to be prepared as part of the preparations for the World Conference on Human Rights, be submitted as an official document of the Preparatory Committee at its third session.

(Signed) Bill Barker
Acting Permanent Representative

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WORLD CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS

NATIONAL ACTION PLANS

Objective

To establish a specific World Conference activity which will provide, in a practical way, for improved observance of human rights standards.

Means of achievement

A written plan of action would be drawn up by each State and submitted to the fourth session of the Preparatory Committee for the World Conference. The action plans would become a document for the Conference itself. Each State could, if it wished, give an initial progress report on the implementation of its plan at the Conference. The process could be followed up thereafter in the framework of the Commission on Human Rights.

Features of the action plan approach

It would enable States to strengthen activities aimed at the promotion of human rights and to link the activities concretely with the World Conference process. It would be a specific, achievable activity which could be followed up after the Conference and which would enable the Conference to have lasting beneficial effects.

Each State would base its plan on its own situation and circumstances. It would be for each State to set its own agenda, within a framework of shared commitment to human rights observance. Thus the approach would be non-prescriptive.

The action plan approach would, moreover, apply to all, for every country can improve its observance of human rights.

Illustrative list of elements which could be included in national plans

A State could:

(a) Indicate the United Nations or regional human rights instruments it intended to ratify and outline concrete steps by which it would achieve this objective;

(b) Indicate its intention to accede to complaints mechanisms provided for in human rights instruments;

(c) Indicate human rights treaty reservations it intended to remove;

(d) Pledge itself to submit overdue reports to treaty bodies or to pay outstanding contributions;

(e) Develop targets in the area of economic, social and cultural rights and indicate progress towards their achievement;

(f) Indicate legislation or administrative acts it has proposed or adopted which would advance human rights observance, for example by:

(i) Protecting the rights of minorities and other vulnerable groups;

(ii) Ensuring women's rights;

(iii) Strengthening democratic institutions;

(iv) Incorporating international human rights instruments in domestic law and practice;

(v) Lifting states of emergency;

(g) Set out steps by which it would establish a national institution;

(h) Strengthen cooperation with regional and international human rights organizations;

(i) Propose a programme of human rights information and education, including in school curricula and the workplace;

(j) Set out a programme of education and training for personnel directly responsible for the protection of human rights;

(k) Set out steps aimed at strengthening the independence of the judiciary;

(l) Indicate steps to facilitate the activities of non-governmental organizations in the human rights field;

(m) Provide financial assistance to other States in the area of human rights;

(n) Work towards the strengthening of the Centre for Human Rights.